

## Friendship Heights TMD Advisory Committee Meeting

Summary – Meeting of March 11, 2008

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### Voting Members Present

Bob Cope (Chair)	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
Mary Herman	Polinger Shannon and Luchs (Employer of greater than 50)
Gregory Knoop	Oudens + Knoop Architects (Employer of fewer than 50)
N. Leslie Olson	Chevy Chase Land Company
Carlean Russell	Saks Fifth Avenue (Employer of greater than 50)
Robert Schwarzbart	Friendship Heights Village Council
Jeffrey Slavin	Town of Somerset
R. Mallory Starr	Somerset House Management Association
Garry Tyran	Eagle Bank (Employer of fewer than 50)
Kenneth Williams	GEICO

### Non-Voting Members Present

Sandra L. Brecher	DPWT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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### TMD Staff Present

Jim Carlson	DPWT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
David Kantor	DPWT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

### Absent

Jessica Adams (Vice Chair)	The JBG Companies
Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Charles Kines	M-NCPPC
Steven Robins, Esq.	Lerch, Early and Brewer, Representing Wisconsin Place

### Guests

April Birnbaum	For Steven Robins/Lerch, Early and Brewer
Julian Mansfield	Village of Friendship Heights
William McCloskey	Brookdale Resident
Barbara Tauben	Friendship Heights Village Civic Association

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**Items 1, 2, & 3 – Introductions, Review/Approval of Minutes, Chair's Comments:** Members and guests introduced themselves. Minutes from the February 12th meeting were approved and seconded as written.

**Chair Bob Cope** stated that the budget meeting with the County Executive was held on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Cope represented the Advisory Committee and presented the priorities and recommendations. CAO Tim Firestone said at the meeting that the County was working with approximately a \$300 Million deficit. The County Executive's operating budget press conference is scheduled for Monday, March 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Item 4 – Taxi Stand Update:** The Committee requested at the February meeting (letter included in the meeting packet) that DPWT allow 120 days to evaluate the taxi call button arrangement, extending the original deadline from December 15, 2007 (new deadline around May 1); the letter included a request that the Willard stand also be closed during this time in order to urge taxi drivers to use the stand behind Giant. The County granted the extension, but is not willing to close the stand on Willard, since this may curtail taxi service.

**Robert Schwarzbart** stated that leaving the Willard stand open does not allow for a complete evaluation of the taxi call button. **Mr. Schwarzbart** added that he would like to see the taxis back on Wisconsin Circle.

**Mr. Cope** stated that no matter what the Committee decides regarding the taxi issue, the Willard stand will not be closed. He stated that the County should proceed with the 120 day evaluation. Mr. Cope added that in approximately 6 months the taxis will move across Willard Avenue to Wisconsin Place.

**Leonard Grant** responded that he is concerned that the taxi stand at Wisconsin Place will not be able to accommodate enough taxis; that stand will only have room for two taxis. Like other areas in Montgomery County, such as Bethesda, Silver Spring, etc. he would like to see Friendship Heights have a viable cab stand.

**Barbara Tauben** (guest – President, Friendship Heights Village Civic Assn.) asked if the TMD has tried to enlist the aide of the Planning Board, since the problem began with them. It was a condition of approval for the Chevy Chase Center development to provide the lot behind Giant with the taxi call button on Wisconsin Circle. That condition has proven unworkable.

**Greg Knoop** suggested the committee ask the Planning Board for five examples of stands where this type of arrangement has worked successfully. He thinks the committee should await the DPWT response to the earlier letter before taking pursuing further action. It was also suggested that a representative of the Planning Board be invited to an Advisory Committee meeting to defend the current arrangement or suggest an alternative.

**Jeffrey Slavin** said he felt that there would not be a problem once Wisconsin Place is open. He agreed there would need to be adequate signs in the Metro Station to ensure that those looking for a cab could select the correct station exit, but thinks having that stand and the one at Giant would be better for Friendship Heights and Somerset.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** feels there will be an insufficient space for taxis at the Wisconsin Place stand.

**Leslie Olson** said the taxi companies could put up direct lines into their dispatchers to make the Giant stand work better. Wisconsin Circle was not designed for one-lane operation which is what would happen with a taxi stand on the street there. She feels it will be dangerous to permit taxis to park there, with doors opening and buses passing – someone will be hit. She feels this committee would be responsible if someone was hit as a result of putting the taxis back on Wisconsin Circle.

**Sande Brecher** stated that this committee is solely advisory to DPWT and would not actually make the decision on whether to put taxis back on Wisconsin Circle. She also informed the committee the Taxicab Services Advisory Committee (TSAC) meets March 18<sup>th</sup> at the Executive Office Building in Rockville; it would be helpful if a few of the TMD Advisory Committee members could attend. Taxicab owners and drivers are represented on TSAC. Additionally, one

or two of the members of the taxi industry could be invited to attend a TMD meeting and speak with the Committee as a follow-up. **Ms. Olsen, Mr. Schwarzbart, Mr. Grant** indicated they would be interested in attending the TSAC meeting.

**Mr. Slavin** moved to write a letter to DPWT requesting the taxis be returned to Wisconsin Circle. The motion was seconded by **Mr. Grant**, but failed on a vote of three in favor and nine opposed.

**Mr. Cope** indicated that he would like to invite members of TSAC to attend the next TMD Advisory Committee meeting, regardless of whether TMD Advisory Committee members attend the TSAC meeting.

**Item 6 – Commuter Store:** **Ms. Brecher** stated that the County expects to obtain a signed lease by the end of February. At that point, there remains approximately 8 weeks of work left to be done to make the space ready for move-in. The name for both this store and the Silver Spring store is “*TriPS*”, an acronym for Transportation, Resources, Information, and Places to See. She circulated a copy of the store logo for committee review and feedback.

**Item 5 – Wisconsin Avenue Pedestrian Safety:** The State Highway Administration (SHA) has responded to the Committee’s request in January for safety studies at key Wisconsin Avenue intersections. A copy of that letter is in the packet. Studies are scheduled for the Spring/Summer time frame.

**Barbara Tauben** suggested that the specific problems would first need to be defined. **Ms. Tauben** suggested that there should be some preliminary joint discussion between interested members of the TMD Advisory Committee and the Friendship Heights Civic Association prior to the planned site visit by SHA, identifying specific problem areas and suggesting some possible solutions.

**Mr. Cope** would like to invite SHA staff working on this to meet with the TMD.

**Ms. Tauben** added that the County’s DPWT is in the process of seeking funding for a traffic signal modernization plan. Although this is a long term plan, there are elements of it that could be beneficial in the near future. As such, **Ms. Tauben** suggested that if either individuals or a group would like to support those funding requests to the County Council, now would be the optimum time, as the Council is currently considering the Capital Improvements budget.

**Mr. Cope** stated it should be feasible to deal with both the SHA and taxicab issue in the April meeting.

**Item 7 -Term Expirations:** **Carlean Russell, Steven Robins and Bob Cope** will complete their second terms on June 30, 2008. Formal notice will be sent from the County Executive’s office, with explanations of the process for selecting a replacement.

**Mr. Slavin** nominated **Mr. Schwarzbart** to succeed **Mr. Cope** as Chair. The motion was seconded. **Garry Tyran** was nominated and seconded as the next Vice Chair. Both nominees were elected unanimously. **Mr. Schwarzbart** and **Mr. Tyran** will assume Chair and Vice Chair duties at the July meeting.

**Meeting Adjourned at 10:00 AM**

**Next meeting date: April 8, 2008**

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